



**TESTIMONY OF
MARY JANE FAY
PRESIDENT
CT PLUMBING, HEATING & COOLING CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 23, 2011**

The Connecticut Plumbing, Heating and Cooling Contractors Association (CT-PHCC) **submits the following comments *opposing* HB-6385, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING EDUCATION:**

CT-PHCC opposes this bill. Specifically, we oppose the sections of the bill that would transfer the operations for the regional vocational-technical high school system from its current place in the Department of Education to the local and regional boards of education for the school districts in which a regional vocational-technical school is located (*See* §§ 16 – 18, among others).

While we believe that this measure was proposed as part of an overall attempt to reduce state spending, it is unclear as to how much, if any, actual state resources are to be saved by this proposal which will shift operations for the regional vocational-technical high school system, a system which has operated efficiently and effectively under the State Department of Education. There is, however, a tremendous downside to this proposal in that it could set up a confusing system of administration and operation of the vocational-technical high schools by local school boards that do not have the specialized expertise and running such schools. CT-PHCC is concerned that shifting control away from a long established governance and operational system will undermine the efforts of the state and those of us in the building and construction trades to develop a pipeline of employees in the skilled trades. This has always been – and should continue to be – the core mission of the state's technical high school system.

CT-PHCC opposes any initiative that would weaken the state's ability to attract and retain students to pursue careers in the skilled trades. We are very concerned that despite language in the bill calling for possible grant funding for the transfer of operations to the local boards of education, that this funding is terminal at best, and the end result would be deterioration or closure of various programs or even entire technical high schools. At a time when state investment in workforce development, especially in the skilled trades, is sorely needed, this proposal moves in the opposite direction and will have long term consequences.

The vocational-technical high school system provides a unique and rigorous hands-on learning environment that is beneficial to students, employers, and citizens alike. Many CT-PHCC contractors and their apprentices are products of the various fine technical high schools located throughout Connecticut. These schools ensure student academic success and trade/technology mastery, as well as instilling a zest for lifelong learning. We see this everyday from the graduates who have gone on to a valuable career in the plumbing, heating and cooling industry. In addition, these schools prepare students for post-secondary education, including apprenticeships, and immediate productive employment. And finally, these schools have excelled at responding to employers' and industries' current, emerging and changing global workforce needs and expectations through various programs and business/school partnerships.

CT-PHCC asks members of the Education committee to continue to support the students in the state's vocational-technical high school system and asks you to reject this proposal transferring control from the state to the local school districts. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Founded in 1890, CT-PHCC is a not-for-profit trade association that represents the professional plumbing, heating and cooling contractors in the state of Connecticut. CT-PHCC and its members are committed to protecting the health and safety of the public. Contractors who belong to the association have demonstrated reliability and trustworthiness and are licensed by the state of Connecticut.